

Mission Accomplished by jellyfishes

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Summary:

“Operation GLADD.”

“Glad?” Max asks, just short of laughing in Mike’s face.

“G-L-A-D-D,” Mike rolls his eyes. “Operation Get Lucas and Dustin Dating.”

“What?” Dustin cackles. “That was the best you could come up with?”

“Well we couldn’t say Get Lucas and Dustin Together, then the acronym would be GLADT. Now do you want our help our not?”

Mission Accomplished

Author's Note:

Writing this fic thoroughly kicked my ass, but I loved it! I've been wanting to write something for Lucas/Dustin but wasn't sure if anyone else would like it. So thank you to the anon who requested it! I hope you enjoy <3

Dustin had thought that seeing Max and Lucas together hurt because he wanted *Max*. He spent a considerable amount of time thinking about her—her hair, her smile, her bravery, her humor. But he thought about Lucas too. He wondered what it would feel like to be tucked under Lucas' arm like Max is on movie nights, or how it would feel to kiss his cheek, just casually, like Max does so often.

Dustin thinks it must be some weird way of coping with the fact that his crush chose his best friend instead of him. It isn't too far of a leap, really.

During the summer before Junior year, Lucas and Max break up. The real kind of break up, not the "I'm mad at you for now, but everything will be fine tomorrow" kind of break up. Mike and El, who have grown closer to Max once they got over the rocky start, are put in charge of cheering Max up. Dustin and Will take Lucas.

Mike gave them direct orders to not ask Lucas any questions about the break up, but of course, the first thing that comes to mind when Dustin sees Lucas is, "What happened, man?"

Will shoots Dustin a nervous look, but it's too late to retract the words.

Lucas is curled up miserably on his bed, wearing pajamas and a fuzzy robe that he must have borrowed from his dad, because it's gigantic on him. In his hands, he's holding a yellow hair clip that belongs to Max. "It all happened so fast," Lucas sighs. "We were arguing about something really stupid, and then she said she doesn't think she can make me happy anymore, whatever that means. I think she just

wanted an excuse to break up with me.”

It’s an odd thing for Max to say. Sure, she and Lucas have had their ups and downs, but Lucas is *always* happy with her. Dustin can’t remember the last time Lucas frowned in her presence.

“She has a reason, whatever it is,” Will says, in that tone of voice that could comfort even the most distressed person. He takes it from his mom. “And it’s not your fault, Lucas.”

“Yeah, sometimes people just aren’t meant to be,” Dustin adds.

“We were together for *two years*, I should have known by now if we weren’t good for each other.”

Dustin shrugs. “People get divorced after decades together.”

Lucas falls silent, sighing again. He pulls his robe tight around him and hides his face in the covers of his blanket.

“We brought movies?” Will holds up the rented disks. “Back to the Future, Breakfast Club, and The Goonies.”

“Breakfast Club,” Lucas answers, and that’s how Dustin knows it’s bad. He wouldn’t pass up Back to the Future for anything.

When Lucas cries at the ending scene, Dustin knows it’s *very bad* . The fact that his best friend is in so much pain must be the reason why Dustin’s chest feels so tight.

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The first time Dustin sees Max after the break up is at the arcade a week later. Lucas had wanted some time alone after being smothered by his friends for so long, and the Party had splintered off from there. Dustin hopes that it won’t stay this way for much longer—the arcade is only as fun as the people he’s with.

“Dustin?” he hears from across the room.

Max is standing in front of Dig Dug, a new high score flashing on the screen. Dustin groans at the sight. “Sorry,” she laughs. “I wasn’t even

trying to beat it again.”

“*I wasn’t even trying*,” Dustin imitates with a high voice. “Yeah, well, I’ll beat you soon. Just wait.”

Max grins, and then her face softens. “Is, um, is Lucas doing okay?”

“He will be,” Dustin says. He’s wary of telling her more—he doesn’t know if Lucas is trying to act tough in front of her or not.

“Are *you* doing okay?” Max asks, an unreadable expression on her face.

“Me? Why wouldn’t I be?”

Max shrugs, a light blush on her cheeks. “Well, I just—” she lowers her voice, casting a glance at the nearest person, a boy too occupied with his game to care, and says, “I know you like Lucas.”

“I *what*?” Dustin shakes his head wildly. “No, no, I don’t. Is that why you broke up with him? Because I don’t!”

“No, that’s not why,” Max says placatingly. “It’s okay if you do like him. Or if you don’t. But I really thought you did.”

“Why? He’s my best friend!”

“Okay, maybe I was wrong. It’s the way you look at him, I don’t know. It’s how I used to look at him.”

Dustin stops short of furiously denying it again, his brain whirring. There’s no way he could like Lucas and not know it. He’s been curious about what it would be like to date Lucas, but there’s a reason for that. Lucas was dating the girl Dustin had a crush on, of course he was going to wonder about things like that.

“And you guys fight like a married couple,” Max rolls her eyes. “I know that’s because he’s your best friend, but—It just seems like there’s more to it than that.”

“Well, there’s not,” Dustin says slowly, his eyes drifting towards a girl who is now using the machine next to them, within earshot. He’s

glad, because the conversation needs to be stopped now. “Anyway, watch me beat your high score.”

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Lucas starts to look and act a little more like himself after the month ends. Summer is running out, and there’s only so much longer he can avoid Max without it being awkward. Besides, everyone misses hanging out as an entire group, and they haven’t played D&D at all since the break up.

As Lucas starts acting more normal, Dustin starts acting weirder. At least, he thinks he does. Max’s words are in his head and they won’t leave, they just bounce around and antagonize him whenever he thinks about Lucas. What made her think that Dustin likes Lucas? And could she be right?

No one has noticed the difference in his behavior except Max herself. She sends him knowing glances every time someone brings up Lucas’ name, and Dustin doesn’t know what to think about it.

What he does know is that he can’t use Max as an excuse for thinking about dating Lucas anymore. He hasn’t stopped having these thoughts, and if anything, they’ve gotten worse. One night, he caught himself imagining what it would feel like to fall asleep together, and he woke up clutching a pillow to his chest.

Something changed. He can’t remember when it happened, only that it did. And he’s starting to wonder if maybe there is some truth to what Max said.

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“You were right,” Dustin whispers. Their lunch table is bustling with noise and laughter, a sufficient enough distraction.

He watches as Max’s lips form a smug smile. “I knew it. I *knew* it!”

“Why did you have to tell me about it, though?” Dustin huffs. “I was fine before you mentioned it. And now it’s all I can think about.”

Max makes sure the others aren’t paying them any attention before

she says, “You know, maybe you could tell him.”

“No!” Dustin interrupts. Lucas looks over confusedly, and Dustin shakes his head until he turns back to the group.

“Come on, what could be so bad?” Max pleads, so quietly that even Dustin has to strain to hear her. “It’s the only way for you to get closure. Even if he doesn’t like you back, you have to tell him. How else will you stop thinking about it?”

“I know what it feels like to get shot down,” Dustin says solemnly. Every single dance he’s ever gone to flashes to the front of his mind, a long stream of girls making faces at him or flat out telling him *no*. “I’m not telling him.”

Max eases up, sighing. “Fine, but at least think about it.”

“Don’t you get it?” Dustin whines. “All I’m *doing* is thinking about it.”

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Will finds out on his own. They’re biking home from Mike’s house—which they have only recently been allowed to do, as long as Dustin escorts Will before circling back to his own house, and if they don’t go through Mirkwood, because no one has quite gotten over the events of 1983—when Will says, “Do you think Lucas or Max will date someone else this year?”

Dustin shrugs. “Yeah, probably. Max will, definitely. She’s always been cooler than us.”

Will laughs, shaking his head. “I don’t know. Lucas is cool now too. He’s on the football team and everything.”

“Yeah I know, I’m there for every practice,” Dustin says off-handedly.

“You are?” Will asks, and Dustin can see that his eyebrows are scrunched together even in the dim lighting of the setting sun.

“I mean—” he fumbles, nearly tripping over his feet. He hasn’t considered what it might look like, that he’s alone in the bleachers every Monday and Wednesday, doing his homework while he waits

for Lucas to finish practice. And if he sneaks a few peeks at Lucas while the team is doing stretches, or when it gets so hot that they all take their shirts off, well, then—

“Wait—” Will says slowly. “Do you, um, do you like boys?”

Dustin self-consciously plays with his hat, his breath caught in his throat.

“Because if you did—that’d be really cool. Because I do too.”

Dustin’s mouth drops open in barely contained shock. He’s never heard anyone, *ever*, say they’re gay before. There have been rumors about some of their teachers being gay, but those people always end up moving away eventually. And Max has told him about pride parades in California, where hundreds of people march, wearing all the colors of the rainbow. But Dustin never would have thought that anyone in Hawkins, Indiana would share the same feelings as him, let alone one of his best friends.

“You’re not messing with me?” Dustin says. Will looks far too anxious for this to be a joke, but he needs to ask anyway.

“No, I’m serious,” Will says.

“Okay,” Dustin says, and then cracks a smile. “Then yeah, me too, I guess.”

“Have you told anyone else?”

“Max knows,” Dustin says. “But that’s it.”

They pedal in comfortable, relieved silence for a minute before Will asks, “So you like Lucas, huh?”

Dustin’s cheeks burn, and he concentrates on the road in front of him instead of looking at Will’s teasing face. “Yeah, maybe.”

“Hm,” Will says with a smile. “I can see that. You and him, I mean.”

“Well, he’s never finding out,” Dustin says immediately. “Okay? I can’t ruin everything.”

Will's eyes are sad when Dustin chances a glance at him. "I get it."

By the time they arrive at the Byers', Dustin's heart feels simultaneously lighter and heavier, and he wishes he knew how that was possible.

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"Can I tell Mike and El about, *you know*?"

"What?" Dustin makes a face. "No, why?"

Max pouts. "They're out of the loop now, that's all. I know you don't want to tell Lucas, obviously, but you know that Mike and El would be fine with it."

The thought of everyone except Lucas knowing about this huge secret he has is nerve-wracking. Max must see it on his face, because she says, "You don't have to if you don't want to. I'm not trying to force you."

"You'll tell them?" Dustin asks hesitantly. It won't be so bad if he doesn't have to say ' *I like boys, one boy in particular, our best friend Lucas* ' out loud.

"Only if you want me to," Max says.

He doesn't let himself think about it too long before he agrees, or else he knows he would back out. "Okay. Yeah, you can tell them."

He's on edge the rest of the day, probably being obnoxious to his classmates, what with all the pencil tapping and pen clicking and paper ripping. In his last class of the day, he's the worst—yelling answers out and talking too loud, even sweating a little bit. Lucas is in that class with him, which makes it all the more embarrassing.

"Dude, are you okay?" Lucas asks as soon as the final bell rings and everyone goes tumbling out into the hallway.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Dustin says quickly. Any minute now, Max will be tracking Mike and El down and asking if they have a minute to talk. He's *fine* , really.

“Practice was cancelled, you want to come over? I drove today, so we don’t have to walk, and we can rent a movie on the way home.”

“Only if it’s something I haven’t seen before,” Dustin says, but they both know he would agree even if their only option was watching paint dry.

“The sign in Family Video says they have the new Indiana Jones movie?”

So Lucas drives them home, and the further away from school they get, the more relaxed Dustin becomes—although that may just be because of Lucas. Somehow, even while keeping this secret, he never feels nervous around him. He really does have it bad.

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“Here’s the plan,” Mike says authoritatively, slamming a piece of paper down on the table. “Operation GLADD.”

“Glad?” Max asks, just short of laughing in Mike’s face.

“G-L-A-D-D,” Mike rolls his eyes. “Operation Get Lucas and Dustin Dating.”

“What?” Dustin cackles. “That was the best you could come up with?”

“Well we couldn’t say Get Lucas and Dustin Together, then the acronym would be GLADT,” Mike huffs. “Anyway, that’s not the point. Do you want our help or not?”

“Not, definitely not,” Dustin says. He hadn’t asked for their help, but he should have known they would offer it anyway.

“Your opinion has been overruled, four to one,” Mike says.

Dustin looks at Will with betrayal in his eyes. “You too?”

“Sorry, Dustin,” he frowns. “I think this could actually work!”

“*Fine*, what’s the plan?” Dustin asks, exasperated.

Mike smiles smugly. “Okay,” he says, and takes a deep breath in the way that he does before he starts a long D&D campaign. “Here we go...”

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It’s been a while since they’ve been back to the old A.V. room. They’ve gone back to Hawkins Middle a few times to visit Mr. Clarke, but that’s as far as they go in their reminiscing. Today, though, they’ll all return together.

The A.V. room holds just enough memories to be a good place to ask Lucas out, and once their friends leave the room, it offers complete privacy in a way that no one’s houses could.

Everyone meets outside of the middle school, just after the final bell rings and all the children come running out. Once the waves of kids start to slow to a trickle, the Party walks inside together.

“Mr. Clarke!” Dustin calls when he spots him at the end of the hallway. He has his bag slung over his shoulder and a travel mug of coffee in his hand. When he sees the group of his past students, he breaks out into a smile that fills his entire face.

“Hey!” he walks towards them. “What are you guys doing here?”

“We’re here to see you, actually,” Mike says, smiling back. “We were wondering if we could have the A.V. room key for a few hours? We’ve really been missing it lately.”

Mr. Clarke is reaching for his keys before Mike even finishes his sentence. “Of course,” he throws them the one marked A.V. “Just lock up and slide it under my door when you’re done, okay?”

He ruffles Dustin’s hair and waves to everyone on his way out, the smile never leaving his face. “Man, I love that guy,” Dustin says.

When they enter the A.V. room and turn on the lights, the nerves that Dustin has been pushing back all day come to the forefront of his mind. The room is tiny and dim, and as much as Dustin loves it here, he feels like the walls are caving in on him.

Max notices, because of course she does. She's gotten far too observant for her own good lately. She gives him a small smile and pinches his arm, mouthing, "It's okay."

Dustin nods, repeating it to himself silently.

"So what exactly are we here for?" Lucas asks.

Dustin feels a little bit nauseous, but ignores it. "Just for fun. You know, just doing the stuff we used to do here."

They haven't all been in here together since the day they passed baby Dart around like a game of Hot Potato, and El hasn't stepped foot in the room since she caught the radio on fire trying to contact Will. He can tell Will is thinking about it too, but thankfully he doesn't look upset. When Dustin looks at Will, Will seems to think it's his signal to leave.

Will fakes a gasp and then says, "Oh no, I told my mom I'd be home at four to help her, um, clean. What time is it?"

Mike looks at his watch and says, "Three forty two. You should probably get going, then. Someone should go with you, right?"

"I can take him, I have my mom's car today," Lucas offers, and Dustin's eyes widen. *Shit, shit, shit.* If Lucas leaves now, he doesn't think he'll have the courage to do this again.

"No, that's fine!" Mike says. "I'll bike with him. Good exercise, fresh air, you know."

Mike holds up six fingers in Dustin's direction as he leaves the room. It's the channel they'll use when everyone except Dustin and Lucas are gone, because their friends are nosy and want to hear how everything plays out—and because if it all goes wrong, someone can come save Dustin from an intensely awkward conversation.

"Okay," Lucas says, confusion tinting his voice. "Um, well. What do you guys want to do?"

Everyone fumbles for an idea. They didn't plan this part.

El points at the brand new Heathkit radio, replaced after the old one caught fire. They were all in high school by the time the school managed to raise enough money to buy a new one.

They don't get a chance to turn the radio on before El is making an exaggeratedly shocked noise. She's seen too many soap operas. "I forgot to give Mike his math book after I borrowed it today in 2nd period math class," she says, already halfway out the door. "Bye!"

El has never been a very good liar.

After she's gone, Max stands up and dusts off her pants. "Well, this is lame," she says, and winks at Dustin. "I'm out. See you guys tomorrow."

Then there is silence. Lucas is staring at the closed door, his mouth open a little in shock.

"That was weird, right?" Dustin says, laughing nervously.

"Yeah, really weird," Lucas shakes his head. "Guess it's just me and you now."

"Yup," Dustin draws the word out slowly, feeling every beat of his heart, every rush of blood in his veins, every breath he takes. He doesn't think he's ever been this nervous in his life, and that really is saying something.

He belatedly remembers that he needs to turn on his own Supercom. He keeps his thumb over the talk button, setting it on the table and attempting to look casual. Lucas doesn't look convinced.

"Okay, what's the deal?" Lucas asks. "You've been acting weird all day, and now everyone else is too."

"I don't know what's wrong with them," Dustin says. "But *I'm* being perfectly normal."

Lucas raises his eyebrows and laughs. "Sure," he says. "But really, man. I'm worried about you."

Dustin feels the words bubbling up without his consent, overflowing

like a sink. “I like guys, I mean I want to date them, and what I really want is to date you. Lucas.”

“Wow,” Lucas says, stumbling backwards and nearly tripping over the leg of the table in the center of the room. “You—Wow. Me?”

Dustin presses his thumb harder on the button, only now thinking about how humiliating it will be if Lucas rejects him while all their friends are listening in. He’s regretting everything about this situation, when Lucas says, “How did you know? That I liked you too, how did you know?”

“I didn’t,” Dustin says in a rush of air. “You do?”

“Yeah,” Lucas says quietly. “I like you.”

“Wow,” Dustin says, and then laughs. He can’t believe this is happening.

Lucas takes a step forward, standing only a few inches away from Dustin. With his unoccupied hand, Dustin takes Lucas’ hand and brings it to his lips, like in the movies. He’s always wanted to do that. Lucas seems torn between finding it funny or romantic.

“Can I kiss you?” Lucas asks, his eyes locked intently on Dustin’s.

“Yeah, yeah, kiss me—” Dustin rambles, dropping the Supercom and putting both of his hands on Lucas’ waist.

Before their lips can touch, they hear, “Dammit, I lost the signal!” and then a rumble of ‘ *shh, Mike, you pressed the button!* ’ from further away.

Lucas turns to look at the door, and then back to Dustin. He waits for Lucas to yell at him, but it never comes. Instead, he laughs. “You planned this?”

“Maybe,” Dustin whispers.

They hear ‘ *let’s leave them alone* ’ and ‘ *but it’s just getting good!* ’, and then the patter of four sets of feet walking away, somewhat reluctantly.

Dustin and Lucas look at each other with their cheeks puffed, and when Dustin least expects it, Lucas leans in and kisses him. Dustin shuts his eyes and presses forward, enjoying the best (and only) kiss he's ever had.

Even after they pull apart, they stay standing so close that they can feel each other breathing. Never in Dustin's life has he ever felt this close to anyone, physically and mentally.

"I'm really glad you told me," Lucas says. "I don't think I could have done that."

"Hey, that's what our plan was called," Dustin laughs. "Operation GLADD."

"What does it stand for?"

"Get Lucas and Dustin Dating," Dustin says. He watches Lucas trying to hold in his laughter. "I didn't come up with it, you can laugh."

"Oh, thank god," Lucas says, and they laugh about it until their cheeks feel tight. Lucas moves one of his hands up into Dustin's hair, brushing through the messy curls. "Well, what do you think? Did everything go like you planned?"

"Only if we're dating," Dustin says. "Are we?"

"Definitely," Lucas says. As he ducks in for another kiss, he says with a smile, "Mission accomplished."

Author's Note:

This ended up being longer than I thought it would be, but there's still more I wish I could have fit in there, like more Lucas/Dustin bickering. Oh well, maybe I'll write a part 2 haha!

You can also find me at my [stranger things blog](#), where I'm taking prompts!